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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

Following our conversation at today's House Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing, I am writing to urge you to conduct proactive risk communication to veterans in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a critical role in ensuring the veterans it serves have the best information available to protect themselves and their families from contracting COVID-19. I was concerned by your response in today's hearing that VA has not yet conducted any direct outreach regarding COVID-19 to the patients who rely on VA healthcare. I urge you to work in coordination with public health agencies to proactively provide veterans with information on this emerging public health threat. As part of this response, VA must ensure its healthcare providers are trained to help patients understand how to reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19 and what to do if they believe they have become infected, consistent with guidance developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Veterans Health Administration is the primary care provider for many of our nation's veterans, making VA the trusted health care provider on which many veterans rely. We must leverage every resource available to ensure veterans receive the information they need to avoid exposure to COVID-19 and to prevent the disease from spreading to people in their home and community.

I ask that you please keep the Committee updated on these efforts as well as on any additional needs that may arise related to COVID-19 response, including additional personal protective equipment (PPE), drug supply, and provider training.

Sincerely

Lauren Underwood